

New IHREC and ESRI report finds only half of fathers avail of Paternity Leave (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/114909>)

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) have published a new report titled "Child Related Leave: Usage and Implications for Gender Equality." This report examines the usage of child-related leave benefits in Ireland and their implications for gender equality in the workplace.

Key Findings

The report highlights several critical findings:

1. **Gender Income Gap:** Despite rising female participation rates in Ireland, a significant gender income gap persists, primarily driven by lower female participation rates and a higher incidence of part-time employment. This gap often starts after the birth of a child and continues throughout a woman's lifetime.
2. **Child-Related Leave Policies:** The recent introduction of Paternity Leave and Parent's Leave in Ireland has been a positive move. However, the take-up rates of these benefits remain low with only around half of fathers availing of Paternity leave and a quarter taking Parent's Leave compared to two-thirds of mothers. The related welfare benefits paid are flat-rate so income-related concerns are a significant barriers to higher take-up rates along with workplace norms.
3. **Administrative Data Analysis:** Using a 10% sample of all births between 2019 and 2022, the report analyses the characteristics linked with the take-up of Paternity and Parent's Benefit, as well as the duration of paid and unpaid Maternity Leave. The findings reveal that higher paid fathers, who are more likely to receive employer top-ups, were more likely to avail of Paternity Leave. Take-up was also higher for those working in larger companies where a replacement might be more readily available.
4. **Norms and Workplace Attitudes:** The report also explores societal norms and workplace attitudes towards child-related leave. A survey experiment found high levels of support for ensuring that fathers have 100% of their earnings covered while on leave and for ring-fencing part of child-related leave for fathers only.

The report suggests ways to improve the take-up of child-related leave benefits and promote gender equality:

- Relying on employers to top-up parents' incomes results in a large variation in how much of pre-birth earnings are covered during leave as top-ups vary significantly across different employers. Increasing the replacement rate of State-funded benefits to cover a larger proportion of earnings would likely increase take-up by fathers.
- Promoting awareness of leave entitlements among parents, particularly fathers, to increase take-up rates.
- Addressing workplace norms and attitudes that may discourage fathers from taking leave.

Liam Herrick, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission stated:

"The fact that women do far more care and care work, paid and unpaid, than men plays a significant part in women's lower economic status in Ireland. To address persistent, structural inequality between women and men, Ireland must find a new relationship between paid employment, care work and gender roles. This report robustly demonstrates the need for effective and gender equitable child related leave schemes, and where policy efforts should be focused to greatest effect."

Co-author of the report, Dr. Claire Keane of the ESRI said:

"This report underscores the importance of child-related leave policies in addressing gender inequalities in the workplace. By implementing the recommended policy changes, Ireland can make significant strides towards achieving greater gender equality and supporting both mothers and fathers in balancing work and family responsibilities."

Region

Nationwide

[See Publication \(<https://www.esri.ie/publications/child-related-leave-usage-and-implications-for-gender-equality>\)](https://www.esri.ie/publications/child-related-leave-usage-and-implications-for-gender-equality)

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